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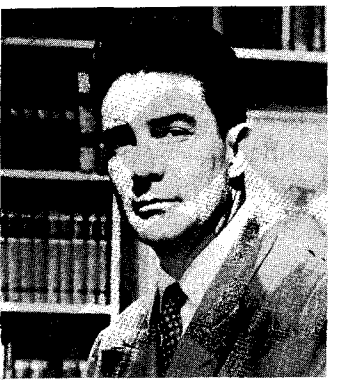

DAN SMOOT

LET'S END OUR HOPELESS WAR

In September, 1964, during the election campaign, President Johnson said:

"We are not about to send American boys 9000 or 10,000 miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing to protect themselves."[1]

Two years later, there were more "American boys" than "Asian boys" fighting communist forces in Vietnam — some 385,000 Americans committed in an Asian land war that may last, according to some military authorities, 20 years or longer. There was indication that the build-up will continue until we have at least a million men in Vietnam.[2] Beginning in 1967, Americans will be doing all front-line fighting. South Vietnamese troops will be used to "pacify" areas which Americans free from communist control.[3]

The President's strategy is not to defeat the communists, or even hurt them seriously, but to keep pressure on them until they weary of the struggle and quit because they feel they cannot win. Apparently, he figures we can hold out longer than the communists can.

Some rather grim mathematics are involved in the President's figuring. Note:

"The U.S. Marine company, now pinned to the slope, had watched confidently during the preceding 48 hours as heavy bombs reshaped the contours of Hill 484. Napalm had burned off every bit of vegetation.

"Incredibly, the North Vietnamese troops were still on the bald dome of the hill, and still fighting. Their primitive bunkers had proved a satisfactory defense against the severest American air and artillery power.

"The Marines finally had to take the hill the hard way, routing out the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. Their casualties were as heavy as the North Vietnamese.

"All over Viet Nam similar actions are being fought."[4]

North Vietnam has a population of more than 16 million; and beyond that, are the limitless hordes of China. Trading on a man-to-man basis — or even on a one-to-ten basis, one American life for ten Asians — we could squander American lives to the extent of exhausting our available adult male population, without making crippling inroads on Asian manpower.

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If we could keep communists from getting good fighting equipment, the gory arithmetic of body-counting would change suddenly and dramatically. The communists would quit fighting because they would have nothing to fight with.

We could easily keep them from getting adequate fighting equipment by selective bombing to close all North Vietnam ports, destroy all major industrial plants, and eliminate Ho Chi-Minh's government. The Chief of our Air Force says we could do all this "virtually overnight." But, he explains, President Johnson's policy is to avoid such action, for humanitarian and political reasons.[5]

Is it humanitarian to consider the lives of American fighting men less important than the lives of civilians in North Vietnamese cities? We could warn noncombatants to move away from strategic targets; and North Vietnam's shipping and industrial facilities could be destroyed with relatively little loss of life to civilians.

The President's political reasons for not bombing vital targets in North Vietnam are grounded in fear: fear of world opinion, fear of the Soviet Union, fear of red China — not to mention fear of the pro-communist peaceniks in his own political party at home.

Nothing could give the United States a lower rating in world opinion than the present conduct of the war — nothing could be more enticing inducement for Soviets and Chinese reds to increase their intervention, as they please.

While McNamara assures the world that the "tide is turning" in Vietnam, it is apparent that communist strength is growing. Battles are becoming bigger and bloodier all the time; infiltration of troops from North Vietnam grows apace, more than replacing desertions and battle losses in the South.

McNamara routinely denies that our troops suffer from shortages of bombs,[6] ammunition, and other supplies, or that there are any deficiencies in our over-all training programs; but enough facts leak out to belie his denials. Despite McNamara's dissimulation and efforts to control the news, enough news has come from the battle areas in recent months to show that our forces have been short of planes, trained pilots, combat rifles, bombs.[7] When the facts come out, McNamara usually explains in a computer jargon that is no explanation at all. For example, "the Pentagon's" justification for the recent shortage of rifles was that there have been "increases in the training base requirements."[8]

McNamara and Johnson routinely deny the truth that our fighting men are handicapped by restrictions placed on them, as to targets, bomb loads, ground objectives, enemy sanctuaries.[6]

All of this, of course, implies that our huge forces in Vietnam are hitting communists with maximum effort, using the most and best our nation can supply. Yet, after almost two years of such warfare, the little communist enemy is stronger than before.

Does this not tend to show the world that the United States is a flabby, irresolute giant? How is that calculated to "deter further communist aggression"?

Johnson has been obsequiously stretching the hand of friendship toward the Soviets, trying to make deals with them, offering just about anything they want — to get their help in "de-escalating the war in Vietnam."[9] Concurrently, the Soviets have been increasing their aid to Vietnam; and so have the Soviet satellites to whom we are giving aid.[10]

One minor means by which aid is flowing from our communist "friends" in Europe to our communist enemy in Vietnam was revealed to me by Mrs. Anne E. Cartwright of Santa Rosa, California. For years, she has been sending weekly food packages to relatives in communist East Germany. Recently, the communist government of East Germany has begun confiscating her gift-food packages and sending them to North Vietnam.

Mr. Johnson is waging a war of attrition against an enemy whose bills are being paid by others and who is fighting at home. Our men must be supported at the end of a 10,000-mile supply line.

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Moreover, we are supporting the enemy himself, as well as legions of thieves, corrupt officials, and racketeers among our allies. At least 20% (probably, 40% or more) of all goods we send as aid to South Vietnam, and of all supplies shipped in for American PX stores, is stolen, either by black marketeers, or by the Viet Cong.[11]

Note these excerpts from "Is U.S. Trapped in a 'Hopeless War'?", *U.S. News & World Report*, December 5, 1966:

"The South Vietnamese Army is . . . without decent or effective leadership in one battalion after another, despite years of intensive U.S. effort to give that Army spirit and backbone. Desertions are high — almost 100,000 men from regular and regional forces this year . . . . Runaways who return to their villages are rarely, if ever, turned in by neighbors . . . .

"Corruption, venality and nepotism . . . have become . . . permanent ways of life in Vietnam . . . .

"Thievery . . . goes on under the noses of police, if not with their collusion, and . . . there seems to be no power to . . . see to it that steel, cement, fuel, and strategic engineering goods do not end up in the hands of the Viet Cong . . . .

"South Vietnamese are getting out of the habit of trying to be a productive society.

"The real domestic output has been going down steadily . . . .

"'What happens when there is a shortage?' an American asks — and answers his own question:

"'Uncle Sam leaps to the rescue. We have made up for the decline in production by bringing in a half-billion dollars in commodities and foodstuffs. The more we bring in, the less compulsion for them to get to the root of their own decline . . . .'"

In all, the Vietnam war is costing us upward of 2 billion dollars a month. This — and not callous profiteering by merchants — is a major cause for rising living costs in the United States. It is the principle reason for threatened price-and-wage controls and increased taxes, and it is one of McNamara's excuses for not providing national defenses that might save up to 100 million American lives in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack.

As early as 1958 (when Eisenhower ordered a three-year moratorium on American testing of nuclear weapons, accepting Khrushchev's promise to do the same), it was known that the Soviets, by testing, were developing a defense against intercontinental ballistic missiles — *the only kind of defense that will give a major nation military security against foreign attack in this age*. Kennedy continued the ban on American nuclear testing (though the Soviets had been violating the ban without restraint), thus assuring that America could not develop the desperately needed weapon that our enemies were developing.

Kennedy tried to outlaw defensive anti-missile missiles in the plan for disarmament which he submitted to the United Nations in September, 1961. Nuclear testing in the atmosphere is vital to the development of anti-missile missiles. Kennedy made *permanent* the prohibition against American testing, with the infamous Test Ban Treaty. The Soviets — who sign treaties only to hamstring the other side — have violated the treaty, without provoking retaliation, or even protests, from our government.[12]

Kennedy's policy was based on fear that if we develop a defense against Soviet missiles, we might provoke them into producing more and deadlier missiles.

In March, 1962, Kennedy publicly admitted that the Soviets were pressing hard toward the goal of developing an effective anti-missile missile. At the same time, his Defense Secretary, McNamara, announced that the United States had "no reasonable prospect" of developing a successful defense against missiles.[13]

Since then, the Chiefs of Staff of the armed forces have repeatedly and unanimously recommended that the U.S. develop an anti-missile missile; and Congress has appropriated money for research and engineering; but McNamara vetoes the project. McNamara's cost-effectiveness guidelines lead him to conclude that saving millions of American lives is not worth the cost of a defense against missiles. Estimated cost of developing an anti-missile system to defend our nation ranges from 4 billion to 40 billion dollars.

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Estimated number of American lives the system might save in the event of a missile-nuclear attack ranges up to 100 million.

In November, 1966, McNamara admitted that the Soviets had developed anti-missile missiles and were deploying them in the Soviet Union.[14] But he still does not feel the U.S. can afford such defense; and it still seems to be official policy that we cannot risk provoking the Soviets by developing a defense against their missiles. Obviously, the Soviets have no fear of provoking us.

For what the bloody stalemate in Vietnam costs us in one year, we could build a homeland defense that might save 100 million American lives — not to mention our major cities, factories, homes, transportation facilities, medical centers, food-processing plants, water systems.

We should deliver a quick, massive blow to knock out the North Vietnam government, turn the whole country over to the South Vietnamese government, and then get out of the country — entirely and forever. This would at least show the Soviets and red Chinese that *when we do get in a war, we have the power and the will to win.*

It would accomplish nothing else of lasting importance; but there is nothing else we could accomplish in Vietnam, even if we stayed there 10 more years wasting our manpower and resources, and 20 more years after that vainly trying to pacify a people whose hatred of us grows daily. The longer we stay in Vietnam keeping the Vietnamese on our dole, the less resourceful and less friendly they become. We should never have been there in the first place. We ought to get out — as quickly as the overwhelming might of our nation makes possible — and then let Asians fight their own wars and manage their own affairs, without any aid or interference from us.

We now have military "advisers" in Thailand on just about the same scale as in Vietnam 3 years ago — when they were also called "advisers." The jungles and hills and rice paddies of Asia can soak up oceans of American blood without helping anyone but communists and racketeers; and they will, unless we reverse the course of American foreign policy.

The resources we have for defense should be spent on defense of our homeland.

This is something we should tell all members of the new Congress — who are aware, as a result of the elections, that people are in revolt against existing policies.

FOOTNOTES

(1) "Walter Scott's Personality Parade," *Parade*, November 20, 1966

(2) "Earl Wilson On New York And Hollywood," *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, October 4, 1966, p. C12

(3) Walter Cronkite, CBS 5:30 p.m. News, November 24, 1966

(4) "Enemy Digs In," by Peter Arnett (AP dispatch from Saigon), *The Dallas Times Herald*, November 20, 1966, p. A47

(5) AP from Detroit, *The Dallas Times Herald*, December 6, 1965, p. A10

(6) "Vietnam," speech by U.S. Representative William E. Minshall (R., Ohio), *Congressional Record*, October 19, 1966, pp. 26726-30

(7) "Severe Shortages Arise In Warplanes and Pilots," by Hanson W. Baldwin, *The Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 1966, p. A10

(8) "Pentagon Admits Rifles Ran Short," AP dispatch from Washington, *The Dallas Times Herald*, November 24, 1966, p. A26; "Mac the Knife(d)," editorial, *The Dallas Morning News*, November 25, 1966, p. D4

(9) "Is A 'Deal' With Russia Stirring?", *U.S. News & World Report*, November 7, 1966, pp. 46-9

(10) "Communists To Escalate Aid to North Vietnam," *The Top of the News with Fulton Lewis III*, October 17-21, 1966, p. 6; "Soviet MIGs Sent To Hanoi," UPI dispatch from Saigon, *The Dallas Morning News*, December 13, 1966, p. A12

(11) AP series of articles from Saigon by Fred S. Hoffman and Hugh A. Mulligan, *The Dallas Times Herald*, November 13-18, 1966

(12) "People," *National Review Bulletin*, December 6, 1966, p. 3

(13) *The Test Ban: An American Strategy of Gradual Self-Mutilation*, by Stefan T. Possony, *Congressional Record*, March 21, 1963, pp. 4358-70

(14) "Soviet Increases Build-Up of Missiles and Deploys a Defensive System," by William Beecher, *The New York Times*, November 13, 1966, p. 84

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